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21H.221 The Places of Migration in United States History
Fall 2006

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Massachusetts Institute of Technology

The Places of Migration in United States History

21H.221 Fall 2006

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The idea that the United States is a “nation of immigrants” is one of the fundamental premises of American history and popular culture. Of course, the United States *is* historically a nation of immigrants. Yet cross-border migration characterizes the experience of many nations, and even this nation of immigrants has had a changing and uneasy relationship to actual immigrants in our communities. This class takes up the challenge of examining migration in United States history from a global perspective, and does so by looking at migration from the perspective of several individual places. Some of them are familiar sites; others may be less so. Some, too, are conceptual places (“Chinatown,” “Hollywood,” “Ellis Island”) that can be both conceptual and real. We will examine how ideas and representations of immigration have also shaped politics, economics, and demography in the modern United States.

Chronologically, the class begins in the late nineteenth century, with two founding moments: the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 (the first major federal law regulating immigration) and the establishment of the immigration processing center at Ellis Island in 1891. These events responded to and ushered in an era of mass migration from Europe and Asia that is the focus of the first half of the course. In the semester’s second half, we will focus on the mass migrations since the mid-1960s, returning to many of the sites we studied earlier. We will also visit several area sites to get to examine the history and culture of immigration. Right now two trips are planned: one to New York City, another to Lawrence, Massachusetts. These are not required, but strongly recommended.

Requirements: The success of this class depends on the active participation of all students. Class **participation** (20%) represents a substantial portion of the grade, and will be evaluated in terms of preparation, participation in large and small group discussion, active listening, collaboration, and overall contributions to the class experience during the term. Needless to say, if you do not attend a class it is impossible for you to contribute to it. In preparation for discussion, you may be asked to write short response papers or send me your thoughts and questions by email. Completion of these exercises will factor in your participation grade. An additional portion of the grade will be based on participation, preparation, and presentation of the **collaborative research project** (10%) at the end of the semester.

Everyone will write **one 3-5pp. essay** (20%) and a **longer 11-14pp. essay** (40%) on a topic of your choosing. Preparatory **writing exercises** (10%) will help students develop a topic, a bibliography, and an argument in advance of the final paper itself. There are no midterm or final examinations in this class. Adherence to standards of academic honesty is required; if you have any questions about how to go about your writing or cite your sources, don’t hesitate to ask. A selection of valuable information can be found under the Writing Resources link on the class website.

Books: Required books are available at the MIT bookstore. Copies of all books have also been placed on reserve in the Humanities Library. Additional readings are available through the class website or handouts. Readings should be completed by the beginning of the class under which they appear.

PART ONE: THEN

WEEK ONE: INTRODUCTION

Thursday September 7: Lecture and Discussion: Where Is Immigration History?

READING: "The Life Story of an Irish Cook," in Hamilton Holt, ed., *The Life Stories of Undistinguished Americans: As Told By Themselves* (1906), pp. 88-92. [in class].

Gish Jen. "Who's Irish?" in *Who's Irish: Stories* (1999), pp. 1-16. [in class]

Roger Daniels. *Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and Immigrants since 1882* (2004), pp. 1-58.

WEEK TWO: LAWRENCE

Tuesday September 12: Lecture: European Migrants at the Turn of the Century

READING: Bruce Watson. *Bread and Roses: Mills, Migrants, and the Struggle for the American Dream* (2005), 1-118.

Thursday September 14: Discussion

READING: Bruce Watson. *Bread and Roses: Mills, Migrants, and the Struggle for the American Dream* (2005), 119-240.

WEEK THREE: CHINATOWN

Tuesday September 19: Lecture: Asian Immigrants at the Turn of the Century

READING: Nayan Shah. *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (2001), 1-104.

Thursday September 21

READING: Nayan Shah. *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (2001), 158-203, 225-258.

WEEK FOUR: MAPPING LAWRENCE, MAPPING CHINATOWN

Tuesday September 26: Library Session

LOOKING: Visual exercise to be announced. Different students will take on different visual records of Lawrence in 1912 and San Francisco at the turn of the century.

READING: Russell Kazal. "Revisiting Assimilation: The Rise, Fall, and Reappraisal of a Concept in American Ethnic History." *American Historical Review* 100 (April 1995): 437-471. [electronic reserve]

Donna R. Gabaccia. "Is Everywhere Nowhere?: Nomads, Nations, and the Immigrant Paradigm of United States History." *Journal of American History* 86 (December 1999): 1115-1134. [electronic reserve]

Thursday September 28: Screening

WRITING: FIRST PAPER due today.

SCREENING: To be announced.

WEEK FIVE: TAMPA

Tuesday October 3: Lecture: The Worlds of Caribbean Migration

READING: Gary R. Mormino and George E. Pozzetta. *The Immigrant World of Ybor City: Italians and Their Latin Neighbors in Tampa, 1885-1985* (1987), 1-42, 63-141.

Donna Gabaccia. "Gli Italiani nel Mondo: Italy's Workers around the World." *OAH Magazine of History* 14 (Fall 1999): 12-16. [electronic reserve]

Thursday October 5: Discussion

READING: Gary R. Mormino and George E. Pozzetta. *The Immigrant World of Ybor City: Italians and Their Latin Neighbors in Tampa, 1885-1985* (1987): students will read and report on one additional chapter from chapters 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9.

WEEK SIX: THE BORDER

Tuesday October 10: Columbus Day

Columbus Day. No class.

Thursday October 12: Lecture and Discussion: The Border/Nuestra America

READING: Benjamin Heber Johnson. *Revolution in Texas: How a Forgotten Rebellion and Its Bloody Suppression Turned Mexicans into Americans* (2003).

"Some Events in the History of Mexico and the Border." *Journal of American History* 86 (September 1999): 453-455. [electronic reserve]

WEEK SEVEN: CHICAGO

Tuesday October 17: Lecture: Was the Great Migration Great?

READING: Nicholas Lemann. *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America* (1992), pp. 1-221, begin reading.

Thursday October 19: Discussion

READING: Nicholas Lemann. *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America* (1992), pp. 1-221, finish reading.

READING: Jack Temple Kirby. "The Southern Exodus: A Primer for Historians." *Journal of Southern History* 49 (November 1983): 585-600.

WEEK EIGHT: HOLLYWOOD

Tuesday October 24: Screening

WRITING: RESEARCH PAPER TOPICS due today: just a basic statement of the topic.

READING: Nicholas Lemann. *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America* (1992), pp. 1-221, finish reading.

READING: Jack Temple Kirby. "The Southern Exodus: A Primer for Historians." *Journal of Southern History* 49 (November 1983): 585-600.

SCREENING: *The Jazz Singer* (1927), begin.

Thursday October 26: Discussion

SCREENING: *The Jazz Singer* (1927), finish.

READING: Elizabeth Ewen. *Immigrant Women in the Land of Dollars: Life and Culture on the Lower East Side, 1890-1925* (1985), pp. 207-224. [handout]

Steven J. Ross. *Working-Class Hollywood: Silent Film and the Shaping of Class in America* (1998), pp. 1-33. [handout]

WEEK NINE: THE LOWER EAST SIDE

Tuesday October 31: Lecture: Remembering Ethnicity in an Age of Multiculturalism

READING: Hasia R. Diner. *Lower East Side Memories: A Jewish Place in America* (2000), begin reading.

Thursday November 2

READING: Hasia R. Diner. *Lower East Side Memories: A Jewish Place in America* (2000), finish reading.

Saturday November 4

TRIP: New York City. Details to be finalized.

WEEK TEN: THE “NEW” IMMIGRATION

Tuesday November 7: Lecture and Discussion: What’s New about “New Immigration”?

READING: Roger Daniels. *Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and Immigrants since 1882* (2004), pp. 129-268.

Thursday November 9: Library Session

WRITING: RESEARCH PAPER PROSPECTUS due today. This is important and required. Bring it with you to the library session.

LIBRARY SESSION: Class meeting in the MIT Humanities Library. Details to follow.

WEEK ELEVEN: MANILA/CHICAGO

Tuesday November 14: Lecture: American Imperialism and Filipino/a Experience

READING: Catherine Ceniza Choy. *Empire of Care: Nursing and Migration in Filipino American History* (2003), pp. 1-57.

Thursday November 16

READING: Catherine Ceniza Choy. *Empire of Care: Nursing and Migration in Filipino American History* (2003), pp. 93-192.

WEEK TWELVE: THE BORDER

Tuesday November 21: Collaborative Research

READING: You will be doing reading and research on the US-Mexican Border, based on our collective conversations about our shared interests.

WORK: We will begin our collaborative research project on the US-Mexican Border today.

Thursday November 23: Thanksgiving

HOLIDAY: Thanksgiving. No class.

WEEK THIRTEEN: THE BORDER

Tuesday November 28: Collaborative Research

WRITING: ROUGH DRAFT OF RESEARCH PAPER due at the beginning of class today for those students who choose to write one. This is not required.

WORK: We will continue our collaborative research project on the US-Mexican Border today.

Thursday November 30: Guest Lecture

READING: To be announced, based on Thursday's speaker. You may also have work to do at this time on your collaborative research projects.

GUEST LECTURE: Raul Rubio, Department of Spanish, Wellesley College, on Cuban-American communities in southern Florida.

Friday December 1: Lawrence

READING: Bruce Watson. *Bread and Roses: Mills, Migrants, and the Struggle for the American Dream* (2005), pp. 241-258.

LOOKING: Selections from Paul S. D'Ambrosio. *Ralph Fasanella's America* (2001).
[handout]

TRIP: Lawrence, Massachusetts. Details to follow.

WEEK FOURTEEN: THE BORDER

Tuesday December 5: Paper Meetings

MEETINGS: We will not have class during this day, but I will schedule meetings on Monday and Tuesday with all students about their final papers.

Thursday December 7: Presentations

PRESENTATIONS: Collaborative research project presentations.

WEEK FIFTEEN: CONCLUSION

Tuesday December 12: Discussion/Screening

WRITING: FINAL PAPER due today.

SCREENING: *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* (2002).